

## Occurrence of Federally Listed and Proposed Species in the Project Action Area

This section of the BA should focus on behavioral characteristics of species and habitat elements that are central to completing the analysis of effects and effect determinations. The section should include current site-specific information about each species, their use of the action area, and the suitability of the habitat in the action area for each species.

The species and habitat information provided in the main body of the BA should be brief and limited to the information needed to support the overall analysis of effects and effect determinations. For example, information on nesting habits is unnecessary if only foraging habitat exists within the action area. The project biologist should not address the entire life history of a species or conservation recommendations; however, clear and concise information must be provided on each species that may be present, when it is present (i.e., year-round, temporary, or seasonal), and its life stage and activity during that timeframe (i.e., incubating, spawning, rearing, migrating through an area, overwintering, roosting, nesting, or foraging). General life history information is not necessary unless it pertains directly to the proposed project.

If it is pertinent to the assessment and is available from a reliable source (such as recovery plans), the information provided may also include current population estimates, trends, conservation needs, or threats to species in the action area.

Citations of relevant scientific literature or research findings should be provided throughout the BA as they are mentioned. And in all cases the project biologist should identify the information sources used for determining the occurrence of listed species (e.g., PHS database, local agency biologists, or *Salmon and Steelhead Status Inventory* [SASSI]).

Items that should be addressed or provided in this section of the BA include the following, which are discussed more fully below:

- Citations of information sources for each species identified as potentially occurring in the vicinity of the project through listings provided by the Services or interviews with local experts
- Site-specific species occurrence and habitat information:
  - ❑ Timing
  - ❑ Life phases
  - ❑ Distribution
  - ❑ Occurrence within action area
  - ❑ Designated ESU or distinct population segment (DPS)
  - ❑ Presence of designated critical habitat
  - ❑ Presence and occupancy of suitable habitat

□ Description of habitat types.

To ensure the protection of listed species in the site vicinity, no site-specific information or exact locations of species present, as identified in PHS maps or otherwise, should be included in this public document.

The BA is focused on the potential impacts upon a specific population of the listed species potentially occurring in the vicinity of the project. The run timing, or timing of species use of the project footprint and action area, local status information, and presence or absence of suitable habitat or designated critical habitat should be provided for the species or specific run using the action area. It is important to discuss species presence year-round if permanent or year-round impacts are expected. Essential information includes the location of the project in relation to designated territories, or areas containing threatened or endangered evolutionarily significant units or distinct population segments (ESU/DPS) of salmonids, as well as the characteristics and presence of designated critical habitat within the project action area.

Often BAs fail to provide adequate information on species life histories, habitat requirements, and ecology, especially for local populations, at the action area scale. Another common shortcoming in BAs is to state illogical or erroneous assumptions (e.g., because the area has only second-growth vegetation, there is no bald eagle use). Information provided in this section should be logical, detailed, and empirically sound. The project biologist should strive to provide a comparative analysis by describing the available habitat features in comparison to habitat features that define suitable habitat. This analysis should be presented for species within the project action area and in the project vicinity, to determine whether species may move through the project action area en route to foraging or nesting habitats.

This section of the BA provides information pertaining to occurrence of a species within the immediate vicinity of the project area and in the action area itself, and details the specific habitat types and features within this area. The project biologist must also identify whether any designated critical habitat is located in the project action area.

In addition, a project biologist may want to include sketches of habitat types in the project vicinity, completed during a site visit, or aerial photos or maps of the project area showing locations of different habitat types. Sketches are particularly useful for identifying subtle in-channel habitat variations that may not be readily apparent in a photograph.

General life history and habitat requirement information should be included in the appendices of the BA. This discussion should provide ecology and life history information relevant to the specific project and its action area. Some general species-level information, such as species information on a regional or statewide scale, can provide useful background for reviewers; however, this information should be kept to a minimum. For information on species occurring in Washington state, view the [western Washington](#) or [eastern Washington](#) USFWS websites or [NMFS website](#).

Discussion of essential fish habitat and analysis of project impacts on essential fish habitat should be confined to a self-contained assessment included in an appendix to the BA.

Follow this link to view the Occurrence of Federally Listed Species in the Project Action Area section of the [BA Form](#).